



PINAL CORRIDORS DEFINITION STUDY

Contract T0449-0001

ADOT Purchase Order No. PGKG 2465

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING NO. 2

January 31, 2005

Arizona Department of Transportation

206 S. 17th Avenue

Green Room

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Technical Advisory Committee

Mark Young, Town of Queen Creek

Ed Stillings, Federal Highway
Administration

Rick Powers, Arizona Department of
Transportation

Larry Quick, Town of Florence

Ron Grittman, City of Apache
Junction

Tim Oliver, Maricopa Department of
Transportation

Sandra Shade, Gila River Indian
Community

James Moline, Gila River Indian
Community

Stuart Boggs, Regional Public Transit
Authority/Valley Metro

Ken Hall, Maricopa Association of
Governments

Bill Leister, Central Arizona
Association of Governments

Joe Blanton, City of Eloy

Alton Bruce, City of Coolidge

AJ Blaha, City of Casa Grande

Mike Normand, City of Chandler

Dianne Kresich, Arizona Department
of Transportation (Project Manager)

Consultant Staff

Dave Perkins, Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.

Brent Crowther, Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.

Patrizia Gonella-Ramos, Lima and Associates, Inc

MEETING SUMMARY

The second meeting of the Pinal County Corridors Definition Study Technical Advisory Committee was held on January 31, 2005 at the Arizona Department of Transportation.

1. Opening Remarks and Introductions

Dianne Kresich, the ADOT Project Manager, opened the meeting with self-introductions. Dianne subsequently provided an update of project activities and schedule status. Dianne stated that the project is progressing although the open houses, originally anticipated to be held in January, will be held in April.

Dianne thanked each of the TAC members for their assistance in scheduling and executing the recent Jurisdiction Working Group meetings.

2. Revised Work Plan and Schedule

Dave Perkins presented a revised project schedule. He explained that the open houses have been rescheduled for April so that the results of the modeling process can be reviewed and presented. He explained that ADOT is developing a single transportation model to provide a common baseline of traffic projections for each of the corridor definition studies.

Dave noted that the modifications made to the project schedule to accommodate the modeling effort effectively use all of the flexibility previously built into the schedule. The scope of work has not changed.

3. Overview of Existing Conditions

Dave Perkins presented an overview of data collection efforts. Collected data includes:

- GIS information (land ownership, roadway network, zoning from selected jurisdictions).
- Aerial photography (August 2004).
- Crash data for selected roadways (2001 to 2003) – The crash data analysis demonstrates that the frequency of crashes is increasing as traffic volumes increase throughout the region. Characteristic of urbanizing regions, the number of fatalities has remained constant over the past 3 years while the total number of crashes has increased. In summary, from a safety perspective, conditions are worsening.
- ADOT Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) data – Dave stated that some elements of the HPMS data set are suspect, but that we will use the HPMS as a base for existing conditions.
- General Plans (land use and transportation elements).
- Transportation studies – Dave stated that the project team recognizes that many of the existing transportation plans and studies are out of date, and that many of the agencies are updating their plans this year.
- Planned development activities – Dave provided an example of the numbers of housing units that are under construction or planned within the next 20 years. As an example, Coolidge has approved nearly 45,000 homes, Queen Creek has approved more than 10,800 homes since 1990, and Casa Grande is anticipating over 50,000 homes to be constructed within the next 20 years.

4. Travel Demand Modeling Update

Dave Perkins explained that Lima & Associates and Cambridge Systematics are cooperatively developing the regional 2030 baseline travel demand model. This model will contain projected population and employment figures, as well as the “existing plus committed” transportation network (without the proposed corridors). These models, expected to be finished by mid-February, will provide a baseline of projected 2030 traffic volumes in the study area if the corridors are not constructed.

Dave stated that upon receipt of the models, Kimley-Horn will perform a series of analyses to determine the need, from a travel demand perspective, for each of the corridors. If a need is established, the functional classification, level of access control and the required capacity of the corridors will be determined. Of particular interest will be to see how the corridors relieve traffic on I-10, US 60, and Loop 202.

Dave explained that socioeconomic input data includes:

- Recent area transportation studies.
- Jurisdictional input relating to proposed/approved developments.
- MAG socioeconomic data.
- Central Arizona College Bond Feasibility Study – Feedback received at the jurisdictional meetings concluded that while this model may still be conservative, this study provides the best source of socioeconomic data for the region. Consensus was that socioeconomic data should not be based on the General Plans of the various jurisdictions or on existing transportation studies.

Dave explained that network input data includes:

- Apache Junction model.
- MAG model.
- Input from Pinal County and other local jurisdictions.

Mike Normand commented that the CAC projection of 250,000 individuals in the Chandler/Gilbert/Queen Creek area is very low. Dave Perkins clarified that the CAC study area only includes portions of these jurisdictions, and not the entire jurisdictions.

Patrizia Ramos stated that the Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZs) have been developed and input into the model, and the 2004 transportation system has been established. The next steps will be to validate the model and to develop model parameters.

Ron Gritman asked how state land is being modeled. Patrizia stated that MAG estimates have been used for this area, as well as input obtained from each of the individual jurisdictions. Because of the lack of plans and data for this area, it is necessary to make some assumptions.

5. Summary of Jurisdictional Working Group Meetings

Dave reported that working group meetings were completed with each jurisdiction during December and January, with exception of the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC). A meeting with GRIC is anticipated within the next couple of weeks.

Dave explained that the working group meetings were conducted as informal discussions to obtain input regarding:

- Jurisdictional perspectives on transportation, land use, and regional access and mobility
- Information/data on jurisdictional growth, development, and demographics
- Opportunities, constraints, and issues on corridor definitions

At each of the meetings, the difference between corridor need vs. corridor feasibility was discussed. Dave emphasized that while a need may be demonstrated for each of the corridors, there may be financial, political, or other sensitivities that may prohibit the development of the corridors as needed. Significant findings from the local jurisdiction working group meetings included:

- State highways are viewed as essential for regional mobility. The MAG/CAAG study created an expectation that these corridors will be freeways, and that they will be state highways. However, this study will revisit the need, feasibility, and jurisdictional control of these corridors.
- Population projections used in SEMNPTS model were TOO conservative...CAC Bond Feasibility Study projections are best available but still conservative.
- A number of jurisdictions, including Pinal County, are initiating/updating their transportation plans this year. This study will have to make some decisions/assumptions of how these corridors will connect to the arterial system.
- Several needed corridor improvement projects are underway, particularly in the northern portion of the region.
- Existing regional / local transportation system will not accommodate anticipated development
- Environmental, archaeological, and drainage issues are significant
- State highway turn-back may not be an issue
- Funding will be critical. Generally, there is not enough money for all of the needs.

Tim Oliver asked whether a comparison had been performed between the CAC study and DES numbers. Patrizia Ramos stated that she has not yet performed an in-depth comparison of the data.

Dianne Kresich emphasized that funding for these roadways, as state highways, is not a given. This study will evaluate alternative funding mechanisms, including toll roads. Stuart Boggs noted that toll facilities have not been well-received previously. Dianne stated that this study cannot ignore toll facilities as an option.

Rick Powers stated that the study needs to take a close look at access control issues. Dave Perkins stated that the study will evaluate the level of access control required, and that the corridors could be developed as partially or fully controlled access.

Dave Perkins introduced maps depicting three corridor alignment alternatives:

- Corridor alignments proposed by the MAG/CAAG study;
- Corridor alignments proposed by Pinal County, as a result of a workshop held with local agency representatives; and

- A possible alternative corridor definition developed as a result of input received at the local jurisdiction working group meetings that were held in December and January.

Dave Perkins highlighted key aspects of the Apache Junction/Coolidge alternative corridor alignments:

- SEMNPTS corridor definitions are no longer feasible because of development.
- Flood control dams, CAP, and SRP 500 kV line offer Apache Junction to Coolidge corridor definition opportunities. The CAP corridor alignment may be incorporated into a linear park.
- Idaho Road interchange with US 60 is preferred northern termini. However, an access controlled facility may terminate at Williams Gateway in response to local jurisdiction desire to accommodate commercial development along the corridor between Williams Gateway and US 60.
- As the proposed corridor alignment shifts eastward in response to development pressures, there is an increased likelihood that segments of SR-79 may serve as a corridor definition alternative.
- Additional crossings of the Gila River are desired, rather than improving/reconstructing the Attaway Bridge.
- Improved Coolidge airpark access is important for the regional.
- SR 87 connection to I-10 will best serve regional travel desires although alternative connections to the I-8/I-10 interchange will be evaluated.
- Corridor closer to Queen Creek is advantageous to congestion relief in the Queen Creek and San Tan areas.

In discussion related to the alternative corridor definitions, Luana Caponi stated that the Arizona State Land Department is currently conducting a land use planning study for 7,000 acres of state land south and east of Apache Junction, extending to Baseline. A high-level infrastructure analysis is being completed for a much larger area that extends south to Germann Road.

Alton Bruce stated that SRP would oppose combining the corridor alignment with the 500kV line, according to a recent email that he had received.

Dave Perkins high-lighted key aspects of the East Valley alternative corridor alignments:

- Preferred alignment in Pinal County follows Riggs Road alignment
- Riggs Road in Queen Creek, Gilbert, and Chandler is planned as an arterial roadway
- Riggs Road alignment on west end is not feasible due to existing developments
- East Valley Corridor feasibility may depend solely on Community position on development of Hunt Highway corridor or a corridor on Community land

Dave Perkins stated that the 'blue line' depicted on the map would provide the basis for the corridor needs assessment.

6. TAC Comments

The opportunity was provided to each TAC member to comment on any aspect of the corridor study. Comments received are as follows:

- Westcore developers are very interested in moving the corridors further to the west to provide improved access to their planned development.
- Increased consideration should be given to improving SR-79, and combining portions of the Apache Junction/Coolidge corridor with SR-79 in the Florence area.
- Consideration should be given to a connection to prison facility in Florence.
- Interaction with arterials, and other state highways, is important.
- The 'blue line' is shown east of the CAP in the northern portion of the study area. The State Land has a large easement east of the CAP, which may provide some constraints.
- Reaction to Riggs Road as a 6 lane arterial is mixed, in large part because development pressures may make such a facility unfeasible.
- Future coordination with the Gila River Indian Community is critical to the feasibility of the East Valley corridor.
- In response to suggestions that a connection of the East Valley corridor to the Loop 202 should be considered, Dave Perkins stated that the core focus of our study is to evaluate the need/feasibility of the east/west alignment as currently proposed. We may have the opportunity to consider some alternative corridor definitions, but that will not be the focus of the analysis. A connection to Loop 202 could be the focus of another study.
- The model will incorporate the funded improvements on Loop 202.
- Dianne Kresich clarified that the US 60 study will extend to Florence Junction.
- City of Coolidge approved 5,000 additional units this past week. Coolidge will initiate a Small-Area Transportation Study this year.
- A Felix/Clemens alignment may face significant constraints as it intersects with SR-287 near the western edge of the Adamsville site. The site is on state trust land.
- Alton Bruce stated that he understands that SRP would oppose locating the 500 kV line along a new roadway corridor.
- The Idaho Road is the preferred northern terminus, because of development pressures along Ironwood.
- Connection to I-8 is important to Casa Grande. This would also provide an important segment of a potential loop system. Dave Perkins stated that the east/west connection to I-10 near Casa Grande will be analyzed. The east/west connection may shift north towards 287 towards the Casa Grande/Eloy planning area boundaries.
- Robson Communities is considering developing in the area, also near where the SRP line is being considered.
- The Coolidge and Casa Grande planning areas overlap one another. Alton Bruce stated that the issue has been resolved.
- Tim Oliver stated that MCDOT is starting to receive a lot of telephone calls regarding these corridors. A member of the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors recently wrote Victor Mendez a letter expressing his concerns with the corridors.
- Queen Creek's biggest concern is that they do not have adequate east/west or north/south facilities. While the east/west corridor is considered feasible, from Queen Creek's perspective, they are very restricted as to where they can construct a

north/south facility. Vineyard Road is the only major north/south corridor that serves the area. Within 20 years, they will have 400,000 to 600,000 people.

- Queen Creek prefers the Riggs Road alignment for an east/west corridor, and would like the north/south corridor shifted closer to the San Tan areas.
- Apache Junction has an extensive arterial network that needs to be constructed.
- Dianne Kresich stated that the Arizona Republic is currently writing an article about these two corridors, in addition to the Williams Gateway and US 60 corridor studies.
- ADOT has decided to develop a consolidated executive summary highlighting the findings of each of the three studies into a single document. The executive summary will be presented to the State Transportation Board.
- Dianne Kresich addressed concerns relating to the public involvement plan. To address such concerns, ADOT will brief the Chandler Transportation Commission. In addition, a mini-public forum will be held in the May/June timeframe.
- Apache Junction questioned how a meeting held in Chandler would be publicized to citizens in other communities. It was resolved that all those who attend the open houses held in the various jurisdictions would be personally notified of the May/June event in Chandler.

7. What's Next?

TAC Meeting No. 3 will be held during the 2nd or 3rd week of March. The following items will be presented at the March TAC meeting:

- Working Paper No. 1, Existing and Future Conditions will be presented at this meeting.
- The results of the travel demand model analysis.
- Summary Report No. 1, Corridor Needs and Deficiencies,

Round 1 Open Houses will be held in early April. Open Houses will be held in:

- Apache Junction
- Florence
- Gila River Indian Community
- Queen Creek

Tim Oliver suggested that a second open house (in addition to the GRIC open house) be considered for the west end of the East Valley Corridor. Dianne will consider a fifth open house in the Chandler/Gilbert area.

8. Adjournment